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Prairie-Dog Town.

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Prairie Town*

PRAIRIE-DOG TOWN

THE TWINKLE TALES

Six Volumes

MR. WOODCHUCK

BANDIT JIM CROW

PRAIRIE-DOG TOWN

PRINCE MUD-TURTLE

SUGAR-LOAF MOUNTAIN

TWINKLE'S ENCHANTMENT

THE TWINKLE TALES
BY
LAURA BANCROFT

PRAIRIE-DOG TOWN



With illustrations by
Mabel Wright Enright

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Chapter I

The Picnic

ON the great western prairies of Dakota is a little town called Edgeley, because it is on the edge of civilization—a very big word which means some folks have found a better way to live than other folks. The Edgeley people have a good way to live, for there are almost seventeen wooden houses there, and among them is a school-house, a church, a store and a blacksmith-shop. If people walked out their front doors they were upon the little street; if they walked out the back doors they were

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on the broad prairies. That was why Twinkle, who was a farmer's little girl, lived so near the town that she could easily walk to school.

She was a pretty, rosy-cheeked little thing, with long, fluffy hair, and big round eyes that everybody smiled into when they saw them. It was hard to keep that fluffy hair from getting tangled; so mamma used to tie it in the back with a big, broad ribbon. And Twinkle wore calico slips for school days and gingham dresses when she wanted to "dress up" or look especially nice. And to keep the sun from spotting her face with freckles, she wore sunbonnets made of the same goods as her dresses.

Twinkle's best chum was a little boy



CHUBBINS

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called Chubbins, who was the only child of the tired-faced school-teacher. Chubbins was about as old as Twinkle; but he was n't so tall and slender for his age as she was, being short and rather fat. The hair on his little round head was cut close, and he usually wore a shirt-waist and "knickers," with a wide straw hat on the back of his head. Chubbins's face was very solemn. He never said many words when grown folks were around, but he could talk fast enough when he and Twinkle were playing together alone.

Well, one Saturday the school had a picnic, and Twinkle and Chubbins both went. On the Dakota prairies there are no shade-trees at all, and very little water except what they they get by boring deep holes

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in the ground; so you may wonder where the people could possibly have a picnic. But about three miles from the town a little stream of water (which they called a "river," but we would call only a brook) ran slow and muddy across the prairie; and where the road crossed it a flat bridge had been built. If you climbed down the banks of the river you would find a nice shady place under the wooden bridge; and so here it was that the picnics were held.

All the village went to the picnic, and they started bright and early in the morning, with horses and farm-wagons, and baskets full of good things to eat, and soon arrived at the bridge.

There was room enough in its shade for

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all to be comfortable; so they unhitched the horses and carried the baskets to the river bank, and began to laugh and be as merry as they could.

Twinkle and Chubbins, however, did n't care much for the shade of the bridge. This was a strange place to them, so they decided to explore it and see if it was any different from any other part of the prairie. Without telling anybody where they were going, they took hold of hands and trotted across the bridge and away into the plains on the other side.

The ground here was n't flat, but had long rolls to it, like big waves on the ocean, so that as soon as the little girl and boy had climbed over the top of the first wave, or



TWINKLE AND CHUBBINS START TO EXPLORE

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hill, those by the river lost sight of them.

They saw nothing but grass in the first hollow, but there was another hill just beyond, so they kept going, and climbed over that too. And now they found, lying in the second hollow, one of the most curious sights that the western prairies afford.

“What is it?” asked Chubbins, wonderingly.

“Why, it ’s a Prairie-Dog Town,” said Twinkle.



Chapter II

Prairie-Dog Town

LYING in every direction, and quite filling the little hollow, were round mounds of earth, each one having a hole in the center. The mounds were about two feet high and as big around as a wash-tub, and the edges of the holes were pounded hard and smooth by the pattering feet of the little creatures that lived within.

“Is n’t it funny!” said Chubbins, staring at the mounds.

“Awful,” replied Twinkle, staring too. “Do you know, Chub, there are an’mals

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living in every single one of those holes?"

"What kind?" asked Chubbins.

"Well, they're something like squirrels, only they *are n't* squirrels," she explained.

"They're prairie-dogs."

"Don't like dogs," said the boy, looking a bit uneasy.

"Oh, they're not dogs at all," said Twinkle; "they're soft and fluffy, and gentle."

"Do they bark?" he asked.

"Yes; but they don't bite."

"How d'you know, Twink?"

"Papa has told me about them, lots of times. He says they're so shy that they run into their holes when anybody's around; but if you keep quiet and watch, they'll



WATCHING

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stick their heads out in a few minutes.”

“Let’s watch,” said Chubbins.

“All right,” she agreed.

Very near to some of the mounds was a raised bank, covered with soft grass; so the children stole softly up to this bank and lay down upon it in such a way that their heads just stuck over the top of it, while their bodies were hidden from the eyes of any of the folks of Prairie-Dog Town.

“Are you comferble, Chub?” asked the little girl.

“Yes.”

“Then lie still and don’t talk, and keep your eyes open, and perhaps the an’mals will stick their heads up.”

“All right,” says Chubbins.

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So they kept quiet and waited, and it seemed a long time to both the boy and the girl before a soft, furry head popped out of a near-by hole, and two big, gentle brown eyes looked at them curiously.



Chapter III

Mr. Bowko, the Mayor

DEAR me! ” said the prairie-dog, speaking almost in a whisper; “here are some of those queer humans from the village.”

“Let me see! Let me see!” cried two shrill little voices, and the wee heads of two small creatures popped out of the hole and fixed their bright eyes upon the heads of Twinkle and Chubbins.

“Go down at once!” said the mother prairie-dog. “Do you want to get hurt, you naughty little things?”



"GO DOWN AT ONCE!"

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“Oh, they won’t get hurt,” said another deeper voice, and the children turned their eyes toward a second mound, on top of which sat a plump prairie-dog whose reddish fur was tipped with white on the end of each hair. He seemed to be quite old, or at least well along in years, and he had a wise and thoughtful look on his face.

“They’re humans,” said the mother.

“True enough; but they’re only human children, and would n’t hurt your little ones for the world,” the old one said.

“That’s so!” called Twinkle. “All we want, is to get acquainted.”

“Why, in that case,” replied the old prairie-dog, “you are very welcome in our town, and we’re glad to see you.”

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“Thank you,” said Twinkle, gratefully. It did n’t occur to her just then that it was wonderful to be talking to the little prairie-dogs just as if they were people. It seemed very natural they should speak with each other and be friendly.

As if attracted by the sound of voices, little heads began to pop out of the other mounds—one here and one there—until the town was alive with the pretty creatures, all squatting near the edges of their holes and eyeing Chubbins and Twinkle with grave and curious looks.

“Let me introduce myself,” said the old one that had first proved friendly. “My name is Bowko, and I ’m the Mayor and High Chief of Prairie-Dog Town.”

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“Don’t you have a king?” asked Twinkle.

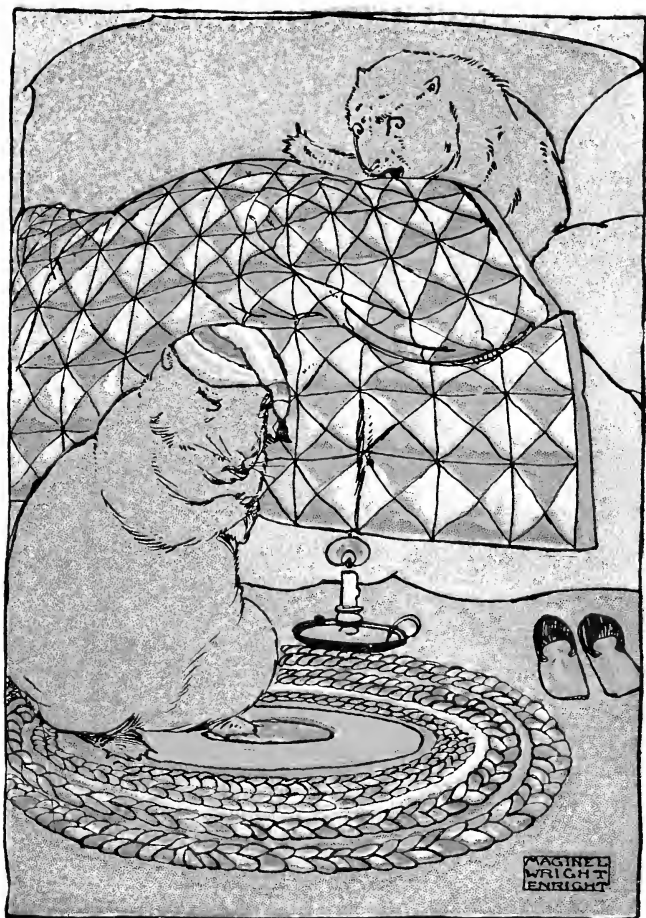
“Not in this town,” he answered. “There seems to be no place for kings in this free United States. And a Mayor and High Chief is just as good as a king, any day.”

“I think so, too,” answered the girl.

“Better!” declared Chubbins.

The Mayor smiled, as if pleased.

“I see you’ve been properly brought up,” he continued; “and now let me introduce to you some of my fellow-citizens. This,” pointing with one little paw to the hole where the mother and her two children were sitting, “is Mrs. Puff-Pudgy and her family—Teenty and Weenty. Mr. Puff-Pudgy, I regret to say, was recently chased out of town for saying his prayers backwards.”



MR. PUFF-PUDGY WOULD SAY HIS PRAYERS
BACKWARD

Prairie-Dog Town

“How could he?” asked Chubbins, much surprised.

“He was always contrary,” answered the Mayor, with a sigh, “and wouldn’t do things the same way that others did. His good wife, Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, had to scold him all day long; so we finally made him leave the town, and I don’t know where he ’s gone to.”

“Won’t he be sorry not to have his little children any more?” asked Twinkle, regretfully.

“I suppose so; but if people are contrary, and won’t behave, they must take the consequences. This is Mr. Chuckledorf,” continued the Mayor, and a very fat prairie-dog bowed to them most politely; “and here is

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Mrs. Fuzcum; and Mrs. Chatterby; and Mr. Sneezeley, and Doctor Dosem."

All these folks bowed gravely and politely, and Chubbins and Twinkle bobbed their heads in return until their necks ached, for it seemed as if the Mayor would never get through introducing the hundreds of prairie-dogs that were squatting around.

"I'll never be able to tell one from the other," whispered the girl; "'cause they all look exactly alike."

"Some of 'em 's fatter," observed Chubbins; "but I don't know which."



Chapter IV

Presto Digi, the Magician

AND now, if you like, we will be pleased to have you visit some of our houses," said Mr. Bowko, the Mayor. in a friendly tone.

"But we can't!" exclaimed Twinkle. "We 're too big," and she got up and sat down upon the bank, to show him how big she really was when compared with the prairie-dogs.

"Oh, that does n't matter in the least," the Mayor replied. "I 'll have Presto Digi, our magician, reduce you to our size."



MR. BOWKO, THE MAYOR

Prairie-Dog Town

“Can he?” asked Twinkle, doubtfully.

“Our magician can do anything,” declared the Mayor. Then he sat up and put both his front paws to his mouth and made a curious sound that was something like a bark and something like a whistle, but not exactly like either one.

Then everybody waited in silence until a queer old prairie-dog slowly put his head out of a big mound near the center of the village.

“Good morning, Mr. Presto Digi,” said the Mayor.

“Morning!” answered the magician, blinking his eyes as if he had just awakened from sleep.

Twinkle nearly laughed at this scrawny,

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skinny personage; but by good fortune, for she did n't wish to offend him, she kept her face straight and did not even smile.

"We have two guests here, this morning," continued the Mayor, addressing the magician, "who are a little too large to get into our houses. So, as they are invited to stay to luncheon, it would please us all if you would kindly reduce them to fit our underground rooms."

"Is *that* all you want?" asked Mr. Presto Digi, bobbing his head at the children.

"It seems to me a great deal," answered Twinkle. "I 'm afraid you never could do it."

"Wow!" said the magician, in a scornful voice that was almost a bark. "I can do

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that with one paw. Come here to me, and don't step on any of our mounds while you 're so big and clumsy."

So Twinkle and Chubbins got up and walked slowly toward the magician, taking great care where they stepped. Teenty and Weenty were frightened, and ducked their heads with little squeals as the big children passed their mound; but they bobbed up again the next moment, being curious to see what would happen.

When the boy and girl stopped before Mr. Presto Digi's mound, he began waving one of his thin, scraggy paws and at the same time made a gurgling noise that was deep down in his throat. And his eyes rolled and twisted around in a very odd way.



MR. PRESTO DIGI WORKS MAGIC

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Neither Twinkle nor Chubbins felt any effect from the magic, nor any different from ordinary; but they knew they were growing smaller, because their eyes were getting closer to the magician.

"Is that enough?" asked Mr. Presto, after a while.

"Just a little more, please," replied the Mayor; I don't want them to bump their heads against the doorways."

So the magician again waved his paw and chuckled and gurgled and blinked, until Twinkle suddenly found she had to look up at him as he squatted on his mound.

"Stop!" she screamed; "if you keep on, we won't be anything at all!"

"You're just about the right size," said

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the Mayor, looking them over with much pleasure, and when the girl turned around she found Mr. Bowko and Mrs. Puff-Pudgy standing beside her, and she could easily see that Chubbins was no bigger than they, and she was no bigger than Chubbins.

“Kindly follow me,” said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, “for my little darlings are anxious to make your acquaintance, and as I was the first to discover you, you are to be my guests first of all, and afterward go to the Mayor’s to luncheon.”



Chapter V

The Home of the Puff-Pudgys

SO Twinkle and Chubbins, still holding hands, trotted along to the Puff-Pudgy mound, and it was strange how rough the ground now seemed to their tiny feet. They climbed up the slope of the mound rather clumsily, and when they came to the hole it seemed to them as big as a well. Then they saw that it was n't a deep hole, but a sort of tunnel leading down hill into the mound, and Twinkle knew if they were careful they were not likely to slip or tumble down.



THE GROUND NOW SEEMED ROUGH TO THEIR
TINY FEET

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Mrs. Puff-Pudgy popped into the hole like a flash, for she was used to it, and waited just below the opening to guide them. So, Twinkle slipped down to the floor of the tunnel and Chubbins followed close after her, and then they began to go downward.

“It ’s a little dark right here,” said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy; but I’ve ordered the maid to light the candles for you, so you ’ll see well enough when you ’re in the rooms.”

“Thank you,” said Twinkle, walking along the hall and feeling her way by keeping her hand upon the smooth sides of the passage. “I hope you won’t go to any trouble, or put on airs, just because we ’ve come to visit you.”

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“If I do,” replied Mrs. Puffy-Pudgy, “it ’s because I know the right way to treat company. We ’ve always belonged to the ‘four hundred,’ you know. Some folks never know what to do, or how to do it, but that is n’t the way with the Puff-Pudgys. Hi! you, Teenty and Weenty—get out of here and behave yourselves! You ’ll soon have a good look at our visitors.”

And now they came into a room so comfortable and even splendid that Twinkle’s eyes opened wide with amazement.

It was big, and of a round shape, and on the walls were painted very handsome portraits of different prairie-dogs of the Puff-Pudgy family. The furniture was made of white clay, baked hard in the sun and dec-

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orated with paints made from blue clay and red clay and yellow clay. This gave it a gorgeous appearance. There was a round table in the middle of the room, and several comfortable chairs and sofas. Around the walls were little brackets with candles in them, lighting the place very pleasantly.

“Sit down, please,” said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy. “You ’ll want to rest a minute before I show you around.”

So Twinkle and Chubbins sat upon the pretty clay chairs, and Teenty and Weenty sat opposite them and stared with their mischievous round eyes as hard as they could.

“What nice furniture,” exclaimed the girl.

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, looking



MR. PUFF-PUDGY'S PORTRAIT

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up at the picture of a sad-faced prairie-dog; "Mr. Puff-Pudgy made it all himself. He was very handy at such things. It's a shame he turned out so obstinate."

"Did he build the house too?"

"Why, he dug it out, if that's what you mean. But I advised him how to do it, so I deserve some credit for it myself. Next to the Mayor's, it's the best house in town, which accounts for our high social standing. Weenty! take your paw out of your mouth. You're biting your claws again."

"I'm not!" said Weenty.

"And now," continued Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, "if you are rested, I'll show you through the rest of our house."

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So, they got up and followed her, and she led the children through an archway into the dining-room. Here was a cupboard full of the cunningest little dishes Twinkle had ever seen. They were all made of clay, baked hard in the sun, and were of graceful shapes, and nearly as smooth and perfect as our own dishes.

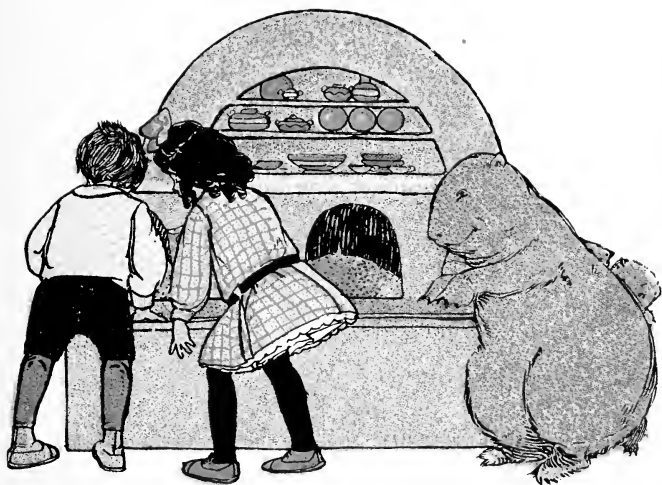


Chapter VI

Teenty and Weenty

ALL around the sides of the dining-room were pockets, or bins, in the wall; and these were full of those things the prairie-dogs are most fond of eating. Clover-seeds filled one bin, and sweet roots another; dried mulberry leaves—that must have come from a long distance—were in another bin, and even kernels of yellow field corn were heaped in one place. The Puff-Pudgys were surely in no danger of starving for some time to come.

“Teenty! Put back that grain of wheat,”



THE CHILDREN EXAMINE THE DINING-ROOM

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commanded the mother, in a severe voice.

Instead of obeying, Teenty put the wheat in his mouth and ate it as quickly as possible.

"The little dears are *so* restless," Mrs. Puff-Pudgy said to Twinkle, "that it 's hard to manage them."

"They don't behave," remarked Chubbins, staring hard at the children.

"No, they have a share of their father's obstinate nature," replied Mrs. Puff-Pudgy. "Excuse me a minute and I'll cuff them; It'll do them good."

But before their mother could reach them, the children found trouble of their own. Teenty sprang at Weenty and began to fight, because his brother had pinched him,

Prairie-Dog Town

and Weenty fought back with all his might and main. They scratched with their claws and bit with their teeth, and rolled over and over upon the floor, bumping into the wall and upsetting the chairs, and snarling and growling all the while like two puppies.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy sat down and watched them, but did not interfere.

“Won’t they hurt themselves?” asked Twinkle, anxiously.

“Perhaps so,” said the mother; “but if they do, it will punish them for being so naughty. I always let them fight it out, because they are so sore for a day or two afterward that they have to keep quiet, and then I get a little rest.”

Weenty set up a great howling, just then,

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and Teenty drew away from his defeated brother and looked at him closely. The fur on both of them was badly mussed up, and Weenty had a long scratch on his nose, that must have hurt him, or he would n't have howled so. Teenty's left eye was closed tight, but if it hurt him he bore the pain in silence.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy now pushed them both into a little room and shut them up, saying they must stay there until bedtime; and then she led Twinkle and Chubbins into the kitchen and showed them a pool of clear water, in a big clay basin, that had been caught during the last rain and saved for drinking purposes. The children drank of it, and found it cool and refreshing.



THE QUARREL

Prairie-Dog Town

Then they saw the bedrooms, and learned that the beds of prairie-dogs were nothing more than round hollows made in heaps of clay. These animals always curl themselves up when they sleep, and the round hollows just fitted their bodies; so, no doubt, they found them very comfortable.

There were several bedrooms, for the Puff-Pudgy house was really very large. It was also very cool and pleasant, being all underground and not a bit damp.

After they had admired everything in a way that made Mrs. Puff-Pudgy very proud and happy, their hostess took one of the lighted candles from a bracket and said she would now escort them to the house of the Honorable Mr. Bowko, the Mayor.

Chapter VII

The Mayor Gives a Luncheon

DON'T we have to go upstairs and out of doors?" asked Twinkle.

"Oh, no," replied the prairie-dog, "we have halls connecting all the different houses of importance. Just follow me, and you can't get lost."

They might easily have been lost without their guide, the little girl thought, after they had gone through several winding passages. They turned this way and that, in quite a bewildering manner, and there were so many underground tunnels going

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in every direction that it was a wonder Mrs. Puff-Pudgy knew which way to go.

“You ought to have sign-posts,” said Chubbins, who had once been in a city.

“Why, as for that, every one in the town knows which way to go,” answered their guide; “and it isn’t often we have visitors. Last week a gray owl stopped with us for a couple of days, and we had a fine ball in her honor. But you are the first humans that have ever been entertained in our town, so it’s quite an event with us.” A few minutes later she said: “Here we are, at the Mayor’s house,” and as they passed under a broad archway she blew out her candle, because the Mayor’s house was so brilliantly lighted.



THE LUNCHEON AT THE MAYOR'S

Prairie-Dog Town

“Welcome!” said Mr. Bowko, greeting the children with polite bows. “You are just in time, for luncheon is about ready and my guests are waiting for you.”

He led them at once into a big dining-room that was so magnificently painted with colored clays that the walls were as bright as a June rainbow.

“How pretty!” cried Twinkle, clapping her hands together in delight.

“I ’m glad you like it,” said the Mayor, much pleased. “Some people, who are lacking in good taste, think it ’s a little overdone, but a Mayor’s house should be gorgeous, I think, so as to be a credit to the community. My grandfather, who designed and painted this house, was a very

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fine artist. But luncheon is ready, so pray be seated."

They sat down on little clay chairs that were placed at the round table. The Mayor sat on one side of Twinkle and Mrs. Puff-Pudgy on the other, and Chubbins was between the skinny old magician and Mr. Sneezeley. Also, in other chairs sat Dr. Dosem, and Mrs. Chatterby, and Mrs. Fuzcum, and several others. It was a large company, indeed, which showed that the Mayor considered this a very important occasion.

They were waited upon by several sleek prairie-dog maids in white aprons and white caps, who looked neat and respectable, and were very graceful in their motions.

Neither Twinkle nor Chubbins was very

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hungry, but they were curious to know what kind of food the prairie-dogs ate, so they watched carefully when the different dishes were passed around. Only grains and vegetables were used, for prairie-dogs do not eat meat. There was a milk-weed soup at first; and then yellow corn, boiled and sliced thin. Afterward they had a salad of thistle leaves, and some bread made of barley. The dessert was a dish of the sweet, dark honey made by prairie-bees, and some cakes flavored with sweet and spicy roots that only prairie-dogs know how to find.

The children tasted of several dishes, just to show their politeness; but they could n't eat much. Chubbins spent most of his time watching Mr. Presto Digi, who ate up



MRS. FUZCUM SINGING

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everything that was near him and seemed to be as hungry after the luncheon as he had been before.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy talked so much about the social standing and dignity of the Puff-Pudgys that she couldn't find time to eat much, although she asked for the recipe of the milk-weed soup. But most of the others present paid strict attention to the meal and ate with very good appetites.



Chapter VIII

On Top of the Earth Again

AFTERWARD they all went into the big drawing-room, where Mrs. Fuzcum sang a song for them in a very shrill voice, and Mr. Sneezeley and Mrs. Chatterby danced a graceful minuet that was much admired by all present.

“We ought to be going home,” said Twinkle, after this entertainment was over. “I’m afraid our folks will worry about us.”

“We regret to part with you,” replied the Mayor; “but, if you really think you

Prairie-Dog Town

ought to go, we will not be so impolite as to urge you to stay."

"You 'll find we have excellent manners," added Mrs. Puff-Pudgy.

"I want to get big again," said Chubbins.

"Very well; please step this way," said the Mayor.

So they all followed him through a long passage until they began to go upward, as if climbing a hill. And then a gleam of daylight showed just ahead of them, and a few more steps brought them to the hole in the middle of the mound.

The Mayor and Mrs. Puff-Pudgy jumped up first, and then they helped Twinkle and Chubbins to scramble out. The strong sunlight made them blink their eyes for a



"DO YOU THINK WE'VE BEEN ASLEEP?"

Prairie-Dog Town

time, but when they were able to look around they found one or more heads of prairie-dogs sticking from every mound.

“Now, Mr. Presto Digi,” said the Mayor, when all the party were standing on the ground, “please enlarge our friends to their natural sizes again.”

“That is very easy,” said the magician, with a sigh. “I really wish, Mr. Mayor, that you would find something for me to do that is difficult.”

“I will, some time,” promised the Mayor. “Just now, this is all I can require of you.”

So the magician waved his paw and gurgled, much in the same way he had done before, and Twinkle and Chubbins began to grow and swell out until they were as large

Prairie-Dog Town

as ever, and the prairie-dogs again seemed very small beside them.

“Good-bye,” said the little girl, “and thank you all, very much, for your kindness to us.”

“Good-bye!” answered a chorus of small voices, and then all the prairie-dogs popped into their holes and quickly disappeared.

Twinkle and Chubbins found they were sitting on the green bank again, at the edge of Prairie-Dog Town.

“Do you think we’ve been asleep, Chub?” asked the girl.

“’Course not,” replied Chubbins, with a big yawn. “It’s easy ’nough to know that, Twink, ’cause I’m sleepy now!”

THE END

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